

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT FOR NASA MARK-UP
July 14, 2005

I want to welcome everyone to this morning's important mark-up. We have been talking about doing a NASA bill on this Committee for a long time, and we've been delayed by the Columbia tragedy, by changes in plans at NASA, and by changes in leadership at NASA. But now this morning, we're finally ready to go. I'm confident that we won't have any last minute glitches at this launch.

I'll talk about the bill in detail when we get to the appropriate point in the mark-up. For now, let me just thank Chairman Calvert for his steadfast leadership on this bill. He has kept everyone focused on moving forward. I also want to thank Mr. Gordon and Mr. Udall for their willingness to sit down, at both the Member and staff level, to talk about issues in detail and, in the end, to compromise.

We can now move forward as a unified team when we negotiate with the Senate. Those negotiations will not be easy. The Senate bill places far too much emphasis on the status quo and fails to make the kinds of choices necessary to give NASA a forward-looking and sustainable program. We've got our work cut out for us, and we'll work as a team.

We expect this bill to come to the floor next week. So at least the House part of the process will have moved at a rapid pace from Subcommittee to the floor.

I should say that there are some issues we are putting off today. Most significant is the Iran Non-proliferation Act (INA). We received the Administration proposal right before the July 4th recess, and we are still reviewing it, as is the International Relations Committee.

I do not think that a final NASA bill should come to the floor until we have resolved this issue. And I think we will resolve it in a timely fashion – but I have no idea at this point what that resolution will be. So I appreciate the urgency of the issue, and I know that Mr. Rohrabacher will offer and withdraw an amendment on INA today to spark some discussion. I hope we will be able to move forward on this issue soon.

There are also a variety of technical drafting issues and provisions from NASA and some of our Members that we could not get to in time for this mark-up, given the time required to negotiate the bipartisan compromise. Those will be handled in a bipartisan manager's amendment on the floor.

So let me conclude by saying that I'm pleased that we're at the point we are today. We have a strong, thoughtful, truly bipartisan bill that will strengthen NASA and move it forward. Let's start our countdown to launching this bill.

Mr. Gordon.